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## R J Donovan Partners with SDSU Students to Prepare Them For a Career in Criminal Justice

The Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJD) has launched an innovative program to introduce California State University (CSU) students to the realities of prison operations and to help prepare them for a career within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) or law enforcement.

Approximately 23 students from San Diego State University (SDSU) have begun working in the Statewide University Multi-Disciplinary Internship Training project (SUMIT), shadowing a staff member or volunteering in the prison for a nine-week period. Areas of work include, but are not limited to, education, housing, Prison Industry Authority, medical, fire services, and administration as well as inmate self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous.

"This real-time interacting experience can be life changing for students and a valuable recruitment tool for our Department as well as for law enforcement in general," said RJD Warden George A. Neotti.

RJD was chosen as the launch site for this expansive educational and institutional opportunity by San Diego State University. L. Paul Sutton, Ph.D., Professor of Criminal Justice, School of Public Affairs, at SDSU, began the program in order to help students make better and more informed decisions about their future career.

"I have always believed that students need to get out of the classroom to

realize the relevance and significance of what we study on campus," said Dr. Sutton. "The book only goes so far, and it is generally not far enough. We are exceptionally fortunate that the staff and leadership at RJD have embraced this one-of-a-kind experiment with SDSU."

The goal of the program is to allow the students to observe certain areas of operation within the prison and to work alongside staff, where appropriate. This experience will expose the students to the inner workings of California prisons. By enabling them to become more educated about the prison system, the program assures that students are better informed as they face decisions about their futures, especially those who choose to work for CDCR, according to Warden Neotti and Dr. Sutton.

Dr. Sutton is also responsible for the statewide Prison Tour program that he has been conducting for nearly 30 years throughout California prisons.

On the Prison Tour, students travel more than a thousand miles to see eight different institutions throughout the state to meet and talk with wardens, officers, staff, and inmates. The students become engaged with the challenges of corrections in a way that could never happen in the classroom, according to Dr. Sutton. Many have gone on to careers in corrections.

This new partnership between SDSU and RJD will be used to create a best practices model that CDCR will be able to export to other facilities and CDCR offices throughout the state, involving students from multiple disciplines from all CSU campuses. The results at RJD will be important to the success and future of the program statewide. The program is being facilitated by RJD's Office of Community Partnerships.

For additional information about this program call RJD's Community Partnership Manager, Frank Ruffino, at (619) 661-8654.

